

What is claimed is:

1. An image forming apparatus comprising:  
a plurality of image forming units that form  
5 images and overlap images the formed images onto a  
transfer material;  
a first controller that has a first mode in which  
image formation is carried out by said plurality of  
image forming units, and a second mode in which image  
10 formation is carried out by at least one of said image  
forming units, said first controller starting a  
preparation for the image formation in the first mode  
while the image formation is being carried out in the  
second mode; and  
15 a second controller that carries out the image  
formation in the first mode after the image formation  
in the second mode is completed.

2. An image forming apparatus comprising:  
a plurality of image forming units that form  
20 images and overlap images the formed images onto a  
transfer material;  
a plurality of scanners that form images in said  
plurality of image forming units respectively;  
a first controller that has a first mode in which  
25 said plurality of scanners are driven in synchronism  
with each other to carry out image formation by said  
plurality of image forming units, and a second mode in

which at least one of said plurality of scanners is driven independently to carry out image formation by at least one of said image forming units, said first controller starting a preparation for the image formation in the first mode while the image formation is being carried out in the second mode; and

a second controller that switches said plurality of scanners to be driven in the first mode from the second mode, to carry out the image formation in the first mode, after the image formation in the second mode is completed.

3. An image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein the image formation in the second mode is monochromatic image formation, and the image formation in the first mode is image formation in a plurality of colors.

4. An image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein said first controller starts a preparation for applying high voltage to at least one of said image forming units that is not being used for the image formation in the second mode.

5. An image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein said first controller starts to drive at least one of said scanners that is not being used for the image formation in the second mode.

6. An image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein said second controller

synchronizes said plurality of scanners after the image formation in the second mode is completed.

7. An image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein said first controller start to  
5 drive at least one of said scanners that is not being used for the image formation in the second mode, and said second controller synchronizes said plurality of scanners after the image formation in the second mode is completed.

10 8. A method of controlling an image forming apparatus having a plurality of image forming units that form images and overlap images the formed images onto a transfer material, comprising:

a first control step of starting a preparation for  
15 image formation in a first mode in which image formation is carried out by the plurality of image forming units while image formation is being carried out in a second mode in which image formation is carried out by at least one of the image forming units;

20 and

a second control step of carrying out the image formation in the first mode after the image formation in the second mode is completed.

9. A method of controlling an image forming  
25 apparatus having a plurality of image forming units that form images and overlap images the formed images onto a transfer material, and a plurality of scanners

that form images in said plurality of image forming units respectively comprising:

a first step of starting a preparation for image formation in a first mode in which the plurality of  
5 scanners are driven in synchronism with each other to carry out image formation by the plurality of image forming units while image formation is being carried out in a second mode in which at least one of the plurality of scanners is driven independently to carry  
10 out image formation by at least one of the image forming units; and

a second control step of switching the plurality of scanners to be driven in the first mode from the second mode, to carry out the image formation in the  
15 first mode, after the image formation in the second mode is completed.

10. A method of controlling an image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 8 or 9, wherein the image formation in the second mode is monochromatic image  
20 formation, and the image formation in the first mode is image formation in a plurality of colors.

11. A method of controlling the image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 8 or 9, wherein said first control step comprises starting a preparation for  
25 applying high voltage to at least one of the image forming units that is not being used for the image formation in the second mode.

12. A method of controlling an image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 8 or 9, wherein said first control step comprises starting to drive at least one of the scanners that is not being used for the  
5 image formation in the second mode.

13. A method of controlling an image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 8 or 9, wherein said second control step comprises synchronizing the plurality of scanners after the image formation in the  
10 second mode is completed.

14. A method of controlling an image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 8 or 9, wherein said first control step comprises starting to drive at least one of the scanners that is not being used for the  
15 image formation in the second mode, and said second control step comprises synchronizing the plurality of scanners after the image formation in the second mode is completed.